

Report of Round-table Discussion on

**Promoting Decentralised Waste**

**Management in Mumbai**

**Citizens' Group on Solid Waste Management**

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# Promoting Decentralised Waste Management

## Introduction\*

On 4 June 2013, the Citizens' Action Group on Solid Waste Management organised a round-table discussion, "Decentralized Waste Management for Mumbai -- Challenges and Opportunities" at Salvation Kendra, Dadar West, Mumbai. The objectives were to understand and address the challenges faced by the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) as well as the citizens in managing solid wastes in the city and also to highlight decentralised waste management currently practised by various Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Community-based Organisations (CBOs), Advanced Locality Managements (ALMs), housing societies and other establishments.

The discussion was attended by environmental activists, NGOs, CBOs, members of ALMs and housing societies, waste management professionals, academicians, municipal officials, environmental researchers and students (list of participants is attached at the end). The discussions were organized in six sessions.

- (a) Overview of the current state of SWM by a keynote speaker.
- (b) Presentation by MCGM officials on the current state of municipal management of SWM.
- (c) Discussion on case studies of decentralised waste management at the community level.
- (d) Sharing of experiences by participants.
- (f) Discussions on the way forward.

## Overview by Keynote Speaker

**Dr. Rakesh Kumar**, Head, National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), Mumbai, highlighted the current status of SWM and different methods employed by MCGM for treatment of waste. He noted that most municipalities in India had no money for waste management. As a result, effective management of solid waste was lacking. "Open dumping" was practised in Mumbai and most other cities. Even when large, centralized SWM projects were planned, these were generally not well structured. Lack of proper planning was one of the reasons for the failure of the current system.

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\* This report was prepared by a team comprising Avick Sil, Emmanuel D'Silva, Disha Gatty, Prabhakar Nair and Poonam Hudar. Assistance was provided by Devdatta Mishra and Siddhika Mohan.

“Has the centralised system in Mumbai helped?” he asked. He noted the scale of waste generated in the city had become too large for MCGM to handle. “Projects with multiple push and pull factors cannot get things right.” He noted that there were no long-term contracts for contractors handling waste on a large scale. Is decentralisation the answer? Decentralisation means dealing with up to 10-20 tons of waste a day. “Will it solve the problem, or will it remain only on paper?” he asked.

He, however, commended the Citizens’ Group’s attempt at documenting community-level waste management practices and identified some issues for future work.

- What is working?
- The level of operation
- Operational and maintenance issues
- Resilience of the system
- How can it be scaled up?
- Will it be sustainable?
- Technical, managerial and administrative issues that need to be addressed

### **The MCGM View**

**P.S. Awate**, Executive Engineer, and **Subhash Dalvi**, Officer on Special Duty (Slums), MCGM, discussed the constraints faced by the municipality in handling waste. Some of the challenges it faced were:

- Lack of land for land-filling of wastes. MCGM received 8,000 tons of waste a day but it did not have enough land to manage this waste. .
- Rapid development across Mumbai, including construction of residential units near land-fill sites, causing health hazards and other inconveniences to residents around.
- SWM rules required 80 per cent recovery of solid waste, and only 20 per cent going to landfills; but this was not happening. MCGM’s bio-methanation plans were off target.
- The new service-level benchmarks established by the Central Government required that the new waste compactor vehicles picking up dry and wet waste separately had to meet Bharat IV emission standards; this delayed the initiatives on total segregation and house-to-house collection. The 100 per cent segregation target has been pushed further.

- Many barriers (social, political and religious) and lack of a sense of civic hygiene made garbage collection in slums a difficult task. Organising a diverse populace and instilling discipline in such communities was a challenge.

Mr. Awate felt that decentralised management -- which means segregation and treatment of organic waste at source -- could provide a solution to some of these issues.

Mr. Dalvi briefed participants about MCGM's 'Swaccha Mumbai Prabodhan Abhiyaan' focused on SWM in slums, where 52 per cent of the city's population or 8 million people lived. The scheme provided monetary incentives to NGOs, CBOs and ALMs for house-to-house waste collection in wards where the scheme was implemented and monitored successfully. Local slum residents could volunteer in the collection of waste. Even the local police could play a role and avail of the monetary incentives. An important aspect of this scheme was the transparency in implementation. The general public could check information through a regularly updated online portal.

In the question-and-answer session that followed, several participants raised concerns about the lack of enforcement of the new segregation rules. Many participants stressed the need for priority to scientific SWM for Mumbai. This could be achieved by composting biodegradable waste in municipal open spaces. Various techniques like briquetting were suggested for treatment of dry waste because of their high calorific value. Decentralisation could also help residential projects and hotels get green ratings. It was the opinion of many that feasibility studies were essential for a good decentralised waste management system. For this purpose, the Citizens' Group on SWM had carried out six case studies, and these were presented in the next session.

## **Case Studies of Decentralised Waste Management**

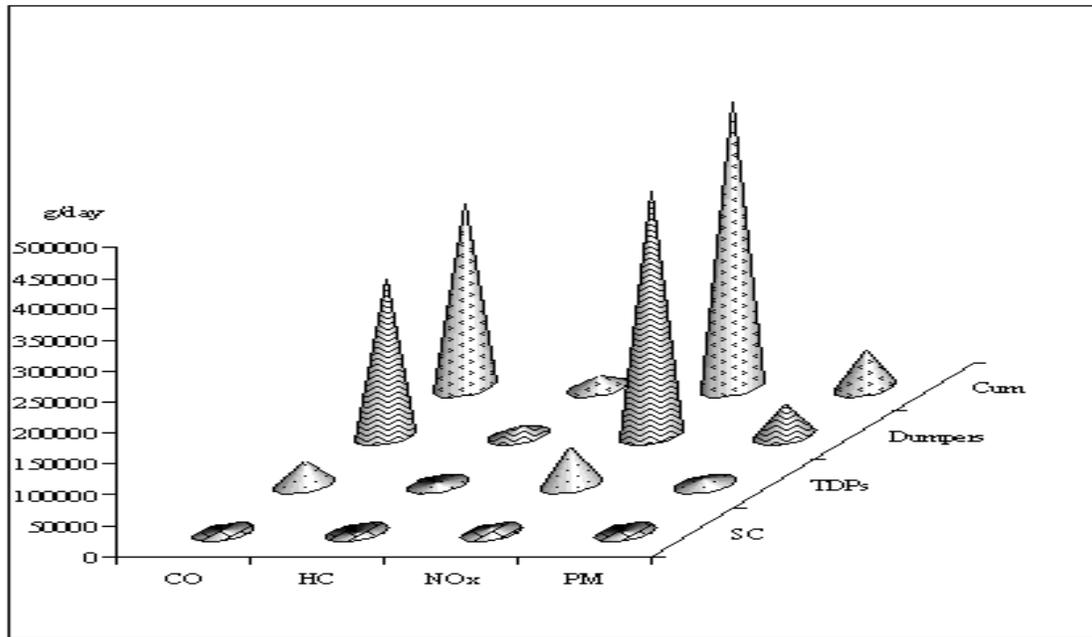
Solid Waste Management (SWM) is a challenging task in developing nations. In Mumbai, some NGOs, CBOs, housing societies and individuals are carrying out some form of scientific SWM. In order to understand their functioning and achievements, the Citizens' Group on SWM evaluated six such cases. They were presented and discussed under two sections.

- Key features of the case studies
- Lessons learned

### ***Key Features***

**Avick Sil**, Senior Manager, Environment Policy and Research India (EPRI), presented the context for the six case studies. He said non-segregated waste was being transported by MCGM to open dumping sites, causing serious problems for citizens; these problems included emissions, odours, fire risk, health and environmental hazards (see Fig.1). The level of emissions from vehicles transporting waste to the dump yards was also high (Fig. 2). This made it clear that waste management needed to be carried out in a scientific manner in a decentralised way. He presented the six case studies of such decentralised systems.

**Fig.1: Impact of unscientific management of waste**



**Fig. 2: Emissions (g/day) from waste transportation vehicles in Mumbai**  
(CO=carbon monoxide, HC= hydrocarbons, NOx= nitrogen oxides, PM= particulate matter, SC= stationary compactor, TDPs=Tata dumper-placer, and Cum=cumulative)

### ***Case 1: Heads of Advanced Locality Management (HELM), Bandra***

Developed by Christopher Pereira, HELM's "Compost Tumblers" are an innovative and easy-to-use composting technology. These tumblers are designed in horizontal and vertical versions (Fig. 3) and have different capacities. HELM has installed 40 such composting tumblers across Mumbai, of which 20 are functioning without any maintenance challenges.

After studying various methods and systems available for composting wastes, and also the problems and inconveniences associated with them, Christopher designed a simple and convenient system -- a drum or a bin (high-density plastic or metal), with holes at the top and the bottom for aeration, held off the ground on a metal stand and pivoted on a rod or pipe across the centre which allows the drum, mounted on large bearings, to be easily rotated.

The vertical bin, consisting of a set of two tumblers, can handle 8-10 kg of waste a day, cater to 1-5 families and produce up to 30 kg of compost a month (depending on the waste input). For larger capacities, more tumblers can be added; four tumblers, combined into a

“composting station”, can cater to 10-20 families. The horizontal drum can handle up to 25-30 kg waste a day, and can serve up to 40 families. (These figures are approximate.)



Fig. 3: HELM's Compost Tumblers

### Case 2: Devangini Society, Vile Parle (East)

Devangini Society's composting scheme was initiated by Satish Kolvankar, an architect. This society has 30 houses. All residents segregate waste (Fig. 4). Vegetable and garden wastes go for vermi-composting while segregated plastics, papers and electronic waste are sold to recyclers. The earning from the recyclable material goes to maintain the vermi-composting unit. Only bones and inert waste are handed over to MCGM for disposal.

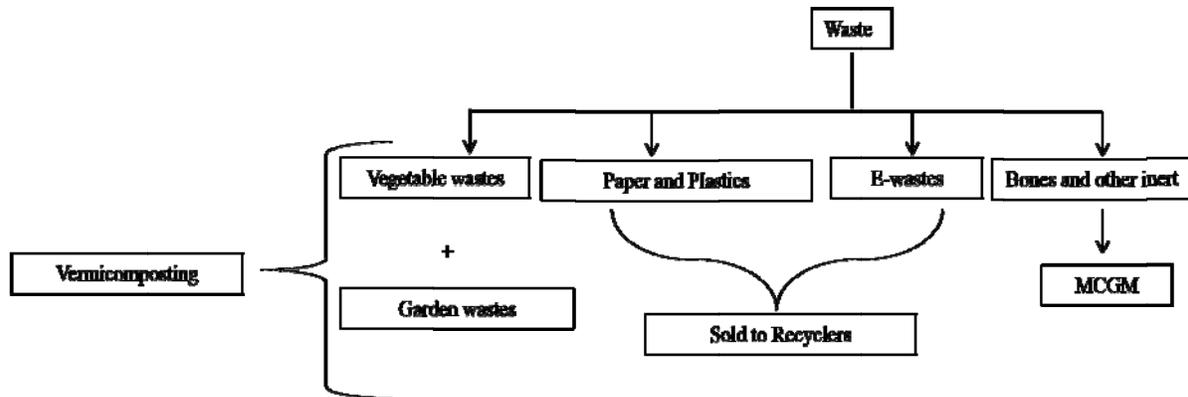


Fig. 4: Devangini Society Residents' Charter

This combination of segregation at source by residents, composting of wet waste and good management of paper, plastic and e-waste has reduced the waste being handed over by the society to the municipality by 70-75 per cent, according to Mr. Kolvankar. .

Key features:

- Segregation at source
- Management of plastic and e-waste
- 70-75% reduction in waste handed over to MCGM.

### ***Case 3: Niklang Social Works Mandal, Borivili East***

Niklang Social Works Mandal, a CBO, manages about 1 ton of flower waste a day in Siddharth Nagar, Borivali (East). This social enterprise was started by Subhash Nahire (who left the organisation recently) and Nasim Inamdar in 2004 when MCGM offered the Mandal a plot of land and delivery of flower wastes that it collects from nearby temples for scientific treatment. Raising a loan of Rs 5 lakh from banks and other sources, the CBO set up around 29 vermi-compost pits to process the waste. It could repay the loan in about four years with income generated from the sale of compost and nursery plants (it has also set up a plant nursery in the waste yard).

The Mandal now produces about 4 tons of compost a month. Initially, there was a problem in selling the compost but now, with increased environmental awareness among people, all the compost is sold to residents and housing societies around, and (in bulk packages) to big farmers and companies associated with farming (as business or as Corporate Social Responsibility projects). Of course, when there is a drought in the state, like in 2012, the demand drops.

However, the Mandal faces some challenges in managing the waste. Table 1 lists these challenges and also some potential solutions.

**Table 1: Challenges faced by Niklang Social Works Mandal**

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Potential Solutions</b>
Lack of water supply. The Mandal buys about 20,000 litres of tanker water per month to help in composting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use grey water in composting</li><li>• Study the feasibility of installing a sewage treatment plant for getting this grey water</li></ul>
Absence of power source for mechanical operations or mechanical biowaste	If MCGM is reluctant to provide power, the feasibility of installing generators should be examined

converters

Reducing composting period For greater commercial viability, the composting period should be reduced from 45 days to two weeks. This could be done initially by using commercially available enzymatic solutions or by treatment using volatile solids.

Odour issues Odour can be tackled by using odour-free sprays available in the market

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#### ***Case 4: Environment Education Centre, Kandivili East***

Afzal Khatri and his wife Nusrat have converted a waste dump in the Samta Nagar Police Station campus in Kandivili East into a composting site, a beautiful garden and an Environment Education Centre (Fig. 5). For this effort, they received the Indira Gandhi Environment Award from the Central Government.

The Centre collects about 150 kg of segregated waste a day (around 50 tons a year) and treats it in compost pits built for them by MCGM. The waste comes from the Environment Centre, nearby buildings and the local municipal market (waste from the market is brought to the Centre by MCGM). The wastes are composted by traditional methods..

The Khatri's say "hard work, passion, and focus on sustainability" are important to continue their work. They, however, are in no position to expand their work, though they offer to provide advice to people interested in doing similar things.



**Fig. 5: Afzal and Nusrat Khatri in the garden they created from a waste dump**

### ***Case 5: Triratna Prerana Mandal, Santa Cruz***

The Triratna Prerana Mandal (TPM), an NGO, operates a waste management system in Santacruz West using the MCGM's community waste-bin adoption system. The Mandal set up a Garbage Collection and Segregation Centre in 2005. According to Dayanand Jadhav and Dilip Kadam, who manage the organisation, about 2 tons of wet and dry wastes are collected in a day from over 500 hutments and 350 flats and shops/hotels in the area.

From this, the Centre segregates about 600 kg of recyclable dry waste a day and sells it to waste recyclers. The rest of the mixed waste is handed over to MCGM. Recycling the dry waste has reduced the amount of waste going to the dumping ground. The Mandal does not have enough land to compost the wet waste; however, it now composts about 5.5 kg of flower waste a day in a small compost pit (though this unit was not functioning to its optimum potential at the time of the Citizens' Group's visit).

Some of the other challenges that TPM faced are highlighted in Table 2.

**Table 2: Challenges faced by Triratna Prerana Mandal**

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Potential solutions</b>
Lack of wet waste management	If land cannot be obtained from MCGM for composting, setting up of a biogas plant in the existing space should be considered
Flower waste composting inadequate	Help could be obtained from Niklang Social Works Mandal, Borivili, which recycles 1 ton of flower waste per day
Increasing public awareness in the area	Segregation-at-source campaigns in the 28 buildings and hutment areas can increase awareness. MCGM support can be sought under its 'Swachha Mumbai' programme.
Plan for biogas plant	MCGM permission should be obtained to build a biogas plant, which could use wet waste as feedstock. The biogas could be used for cooking mid-day meals for local schools

### ***Case 6: Imperial Tower, Tardeo***

Environmental Greenliness, a Navi Mumbai-based private company owned by Poonam and R. Hudar, manages the waste produced at Imperial Tower, a residential complex in Tardeo. After collecting and segregating waste, the organic portion is put into the Bio-waste Converter (BWC) machine, then left to compost in plastic trays. The use of BWC helps to reduce the composting period from six to two weeks, says Mr. Hudar. Dry waste is sold to recyclers. Currently, only 30-40 of the 250 flats in the complex are occupied, yet the company is able to recycle 35 tons of waste per year and also make a profit. Scaling up to cover all 250 flats is not expected to be a problem.

Considering that most building residents do not segregate waste, such waste segregation and recycling by private companies/contractors may be the way to go for housing societies of high net worth individuals.

The case study highlighted the following key issues:

- Full cycle of waste collection, segregation and recycling at source with the help of a private company.
- This case shows that waste management can be a profitable business in Mumbai
- No odour nuisance and scaling-up problems.
- Reduction in composting time for wet waste from six to two weeks due to treatment in BWC
- The only challenge here is space availability. Imperial Tower has provided space to the contractor for processing waste. Will other housing societies offer similar facilities?

Mr. Sil summarised the overall benefits to society from the six case studies (Table 3). All the NGOs, CBOs, housing societies and the private contractor cited here have helped in reducing waste, thus reducing the burden on MCGM. The case studies indicated that decentralised waste management was working and needs to be supported by MCGM. However, some challenges remained.

**Table 3: Overall benefit to MCGM from case studies**

Name	Wet waste	Dry waste	E-waste	Benefits to MCGM
HELM	✓			Reduction of wet waste and transportation
Devangini Society	✓	✓	✓	Reduction of overall waste and transportation
Niklang Mandal	✓ (Flowers)			Reduction of flower waste and long-distance transportation
The Khatriis	✓	✓		Reduction of overall waste and transportation
Triratna Prerana Mandal	✓	✓	✓	Reduction of wet waste and transportation
Environment Greenliness	✓	✓	✓	Reduction of overall waste and transportation

## Lessons Learned and Conclusions

**Dr. Emmanuel D’Silva**, environment scientist, drew seven lessons from these six case studies as highlighted below.

1. Recycling flowers and garlands could be a useful start for some NGOs. Three groups -- Triratna Prerana Mandal, Niklang Social Works Mandal and Devangini Society -- together recycled over 365 tons of flower waste per year. From composting flowers, Devangini had also moved to managing plastic, kitchen and other forms of waste.
2. MCGM’s support for infrastructure, space and human resource was critical for the success of some of these efforts. MCGM’s offer of land in Borivili helped Niklang Mandal, and office space given in Santa Cruz helped Triratna Mandal. It was also important for MCGM staff to liaise with NGOs, ALMs and others.
3. It was possible to convert garbage dumps into beautiful gardens. The Khatriis, had done this in Kandivili East. As they have pointed, “hard work, passion and focus on sustainability” were the key to success.
4. Local innovation and use of technology mattered. Christopher Pereira’s ‘compost tumblers’ enabled HELM to recycle 60 tons of waste through 20 tumblers. He believes that tumbler production can be scaled up. “There is capacity to manufacture

more bins—and larger bins for commercial use.” More sites are needed for installing these tumblers.

5. Housing societies that charged members for waste management and provided space for recycling had a better chance of success. Imperial Tower recycled about 35 tons of waste per year this way through a private contractor, Environmental Greenliness.
6. Waste management could be a profitable business. Environmental Greenliness was able to make a profit from providing this service to a housing society in Tardeo. Hiring a private contractor could be a solution in high-income areas of the city.
7. Continuous education and raising of awareness was critical for success. MCGM staff needs to be involved in this programme, which should be conducted on a regular basis, society by society.

Dr. D’Silva concluded: “Waste recycled in these six cases is about 3.5 tons per day, which seems small. But when you consider this totals to about 1,200 tons per year the impact can be huge.” He observed that the savings to MCGM could range from Rs.78 lakh per year to Rs 3 crore, depending on what is used as a unit cost. The former represents financial costs and the latter economic cost to society. Besides, there are major environmental advantages – better hygiene in the neighbourhoods, and reduction in carbon emissions which contribute to global warming and climate change. He calculated that the waste recycled annually in these six cases could reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 865 tons.

“And these are just six examples!” he said. “If we were to multiply these good practices to reach a goal of 100 cases, imagine the impact.” He suggested that the meeting should in fact set a goal of 100 cases in two years: “Spread the word, increase public awareness, and get individuals, housing societies, and NGOs to have 100 examples of waste segregation and recycling,” he exhorted the gathering.

MCGM should put on its thinking cap and see how best it can support this goal. It can help by providing tax incentives, land where appropriate, technical support, and staff to coordinate these efforts.

In the discussion that followed, participants agreed that waste management could also be a good business opportunity. There were opportunities in the areas of green products, reusable materials, and using compost for urban agriculture. Segregation of wet and dry waste could promote local employment, innovations, and lead to several new businesses. Growth in opportunities could spark interest in local communities in taking care of their waste. It was

agreed that many more success stories were needed for wider sharing of knowledge and experience in decentralised waste management.

In addition, **Ashok Ravat**, of the Citizens' Forum, G-North Ward (Dadar-Matunga), emphasised the importance of educating the public about MCGM's statutory civic obligations. These included:

- Statutory and obligatory duties, as per Sections 61 and 63 of the MMC Act.
- Citizen's charter, delegation of power, disciplinary action in BMC administration as per Sections 64A, 64B, 64C and 64D of the MMC Act.
- Concessions in payment of property taxes for implementing socially and ecologically beneficial schemes like composting, rainwater harvesting, use of solar and other renewable sources of energy, recycling of waste water, and so forth as per Section 144A of the MMC Act.
- Solid waste management empowered by Sanitation and Cleanliness By-laws 2006.
- Proposed by-laws for recycling and re-use of waste water.

## **Discussion on the Way Forward**

This discussion was led by **Rishi Aggarwal**, Researcher, Observer Research Foundation, assisted by Dr. D'Silva. There was agreement on the need for a robust policy accompanied by relevant research for better implementation of SWM. Mr Aggarwal suggested that research be done on the cost-benefit analysis for handling one ton of waste. This research could look at both centralized and decentralised options and include the environmental and social costs of treating waste.

**Sandeep Deshpande**, Municipal Corporator from the Dadar area, discussed the initiative he had taken in segregation of waste in over 70 housing societies in his ward. He emphasised community awareness should be the *mantra* for successful implementation of segregation at source.

Several participants showed videos of their work; these included **Dr. Francin Pinto**, of Garbage Concern, **Rishi Aggarwal**, and **Preeti Patil**, Urban Leaves.

## Points for Future Action

Some of the goals and targets set for the next six months (July to December 2013) are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Points for future action**

Goals	Members	Roles and Action Plan
Interacting with MCGM and their decentralised waste management committee	Dr. Francin Pinto (Coordinator) Poonam Hudar B.S.S. Subramaniam Avick Sil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding municipal plans, projects and challenges</li> <li>• Bridging the gap between MCGM and civil society</li> <li>• Increasing awareness among municipal corporators and ward areas</li> <li>• Presenting good management practices to MCGM from various case studies</li> </ul>
Research (new technologies, comparative studies of centralised and decentralised SWM treatment options, etc)	Manu M. K Rishi Aggarwal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literature review of different technologies</li> <li>• Land requirement for application of technologies</li> <li>• Technology know-how manual</li> <li>• Identify good practices by community groups for documentation.</li> </ul>
Knowledge-sharing	Devdatta Mishra Apoorva Ayodhya Nishigandha Kothari Manu M. K	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website development</li> <li>• Social networking</li> <li>• Group chats</li> <li>• Blogging</li> </ul>
Widening the core of the Citizens' Group	Prabhakar Nair Dr. E. D'Silva Poonam Hudar Avick Sil Christopher Pereira	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit and review cases of good practices in SWM</li> <li>• Evaluate and write cases of good practices</li> <li>• Prepare strategy, organise regular meetings, write reports</li> </ul>

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## **INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY ORGANISATION RESEARCH**

The Institute for Community Organisation Research (ICOR) is a non-profit organisation established in 1989 and registered under the Society Registration Act 1860, and the Bombay Public Trust Act 1950.

The primary goal of ICOR is to come up with a body of knowledge indigenous to India and its culture that will enable the empowerment of grassroots workers / non-government organisations (NGOs) / community-based organisations (CBOs) in the field of human development. Towards this end, ICOR is mandated to focus on:

- Undertaking empirical research, including secondary analysis of available data on fundamental concepts relevant to human development including studies of organisations, personnel, and people involved either as benefactors or beneficiaries or initiators of the human development process
- Developing models of monitoring and evaluative studies in the field of human development
- Documenting and disseminating information to individuals and organisations involved in the pursuit of human development
- Training in research and social analytical skills
- Collaborating and networking with other organisations in training, research and community- building activities that will further the understanding and practice of human development.

### **ICOR'S thrust**

The institute has adopted the following nine-point thrust which may be classified under three heads:

#### Target groups

- Work with and for people's organisations, NGOs and CBOs
- Networking with like-minded organisations to further the ICOR thrust
- Collaborate with those committed to people's empowerment

#### Inputs

- Concepts relevant to community organisation
- Global trends relevant to community organisation
- Processes at work in various organisations, and especially people's organisations, NGOs and CBOs, and devising alternative target-group-specific models
- Seminars and training programmes flowing from these works and addressed to specific groups and bodies

#### Output

- Documentation that is specific and service-oriented
- Periodic publication of research papers in addition to other publications